

FY 2024 Budget Questions & Answers

Finance Committee

Dept. Number, Name + Account	Questioner's Name/Question	Response
600 Water Enterprise	FitzPatrick: What underlying expenses are driving the big increase in direct charges?	O'Donnell: For the Direct and Indirect costs, we have a policy where we calculate the actual expense that should have been charged for the previous fiscal year and either apply a credit or a surcharge to the following fiscal year's assessment. In this case, the water enterprise had a credit of \$86,493 in FY21 that was applied to the FY23 assessment, resulting in an overall charge of \$409,344. For FY22, the water enterprise was charged an additional \$26,413, resulting in an overall assessment of \$551,796 in FY24.
600 Water Enterprise	FitzPatrick: Why is there such a large increase in chemicals?	Warren: The Water Department participates in the Northeast Merrimack Valley Chemical Consortium (NMVCC) annual bidding process for the purchase of treatment chemicals. The Consortium is an organization made up of approximately 60 water suppliers and municipalities who present an annual cooperative bid for water and wastewater treatment chemicals to enhance purchasing power. The FY2023 bid results saw a dramatic increase in the cost of water treatment chemicals driven by supply chain disruptions, fuel costs, inflationary pressures, and demand. These costs are anticipated to only increase based on feedback from distributors. The pricing received through NMVCC bid is superior to that of the State Bid.
600 Water Enterprise	FitzPatrick: When is a rate increase projected to happen?	Warren: A 22% water rate increase is scheduled to take effect starting on July 1, 2023 (FY2024).

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600 Water Enterprise	FitzPatrick: Does there need to be dollars included in the budget to deal with the PFAS issues emerging?	Warren: The laboratory services budget includes additional funds for PFAS monitoring. Additionally, a pilot study for PFAS treatment, and engineering/construction of treatment facilities are included as non-bonded and bonded capital, respectively.
650 Stormwater Enterprise	Fitzpatrick: How much catch basin cleaning and street sweeping is outsourced and how much is done with the equipment we purchased? Does the DEP dictate the schedule that should be followed? Just curious as I noticed my street was done after the leaves started falling but before they were finished so it looked great for about 24 hrs. and therefore appeared to be wasted effort.	<p>Cronin: The Town's MS4 Permit requires the following for catch basin cleaning and street sweeping:</p> <p><u>BMP 6D-1 Catch Basin Cleaning</u> The Town must clean and inspect catch basins to make sure that catch basins are no more than 50% full. Develop and implement a program to optimize routine inspections, cleaning, and maintenance of catch basins. If a catch basin is consistently less than 50% full, the Town can reduce the frequency of cleanings. If a catch basin is more than 50% full during two consecutive cleanings/inspections, the Town must investigate the contributing drainage area for sources of excessive sediment loading and abate contributing sources when possible. Store and dispose/reuse catch basin cleanings according to MassDEP policies.</p> <p><u>BMP 6D-2 Street Sweeping</u> Establish and implement procedures for sweeping and/or cleaning streets and Town-owned parking</p>

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		<p>lots. All streets must be swept and/or cleaned at least once per year in the spring (excluding rural streets with no curbs or catch basins). More frequent sweeping shall occur in targeted areas on the basis of pollutant load reduction potential. Store and dispose/reuse street sweepings according to MassDEP policies.</p> <p>For rural streets with no curbs or catch basins, the Town must sweep at least once per year or develop a targeted inspection and sweeping plan for those streets.</p> <p>Currently, the Town outsources all of its routine catch basin cleaning and spring street sweeping activities. The Fall sweeping program, along with the sweeping of Town-owned parking lots, is conducted by Highway Department staff using the equipment purchased through the Stormwater Enterprise. The equipment is also used for sweeping related to the Town's pavement management program. The purpose of street sweeping is to reduce heavy debris and materials that have a potential for high pollutant loads. It takes Town staff approximately one month to complete the Fall sweeping program.</p>
650 Stormwater Enterprise	Fitzpatrick: Has there been an analysis recently of the expenses vs the revenues? Is there a projected year, increased fees may be needed.	Cronin: As part of the budget development process, revenues and expenses are evaluated with consideration given to both operating and Capital needs. Based on our current permit and

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		Capital plan, the existing Stormwater fees are adequate to meet the protective level of service as established by the Select Board. The authority to change to fee rests with the Select Board and we are not recommending an increase at this time. The EPA has not announced the release of a new permit; however, we anticipate that this will occur sometime in FY25. The Town's stormwater program and associated fees will be reassessed at that time.
650 Stormwater Enterprise	FitzPatrick: Who does the drainage investigation?	Cronin: Drainage investigations are completed by the Engineering Department, which sometimes requires to the use of supplemental or specialized equipment or the assistance of a consultant, when necessary.
650 Stormwater Enterprise	FitzPatrick: What kind of expenses are in the permit compliance?	The Town's MS4 stormwater permit is on a 5-year permit cycle that includes both one-time and annual obligations. Obligations include annual staff training, public education, MS4 Permit reporting, mapping, inspection app development, catchment investigations, code assessment for impervious area, stormwater bylaw and regulation updates, outfall inspections, and the development of Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plans.
650 Stormwater Enterprise	Galvin: Total Stormwater debt appears to be significantly increasing over the next few years - what is driving this?	Cronin: Debt increases are the result of stormwater related infrastructure projects, including the Plain, Moore, and Oak Hill Road Infrastructure project and planned culvert

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		replacements. These replacements include culverts located at Pond Brook, Blue Brook, 185 North Main Street, 40 Forge Village Road, Cold Spring Road near Old Homestead Road, and 192 Acton Road.
650 Stormwater Enterprise	Greene: When did we purchase the street sweeper and what was the cost? How many hours (or miles) have been put on this vehicle?	Cronin: The street sweeper was purchased in May 2020. It has operated 843 hours over 3,576 miles.